

**INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC
GOOD CONSERVATION -
IMPACT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL
MEASURES IMPOSED ON
LANDHOLDERS**

May 2000

Prepared By

Garry English

**Western Australian Farmers
Federation (Inc)**



The Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Environmental Heritage
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

The Federation, is by far the largest rural lobby and service organisation in Western Australia and has the support and backing of a majority of WA farmers and is pleased to have the opportunity to present a submission to the House of Representatives inquiry.

The Federation represents about 3,000 farmers, including grain growers, wool producers, meat producers, horticulturalists, dairy farmers, beekeepers and many other farmers in a range of other areas of primary industry.

It is estimated that collectively our members are responsible for the major proportion of Westrail's 8 million tonne grain freight task as well as the \$4.5 billion gross value of production that agriculture in its various forms, contributes to Western Australia's economy. Our sector is the second largest contributor to this State's economy.

Additionally, through differing forms of land tenure, our members own, control and manage many millions of hectares of the State's land mass and as such are responsible for maintaining the productive capacity and environmental well being of that land.

The Federation submits the following for consideration by the Standing Committee:-



-
1. It should be acknowledged that many landholders and farmers are already implementing public good conservation measures on a voluntary basis for many reasons but mainly as part of good stewardship of their property. The aesthetic benefit adds some value in dollar terms; however, this is only realised if the property is sold. Many landholders have a close interest in natural features on their land whether it be native vegetation, habitat for native fauna, wetlands, waterways or even geological formation.

 2. As members of the broader community, landholders and farmers also gain some public good benefit from conservation and environmental measures. The degree of the public good needs to have some value judgement placed on the measure being imposed. In the case of restrictions being placed on clearing of native vegetation for the prevention of land degradation there is clearly a higher benefit to the landowner than protection of vegetation or flora for threatened flora or habitat.

 3. In Western Australia a report from the Native Vegetation Working group released 2nd April 2000 has many recommendations to overcome many inequities in the State trying to protect native vegetation on private land.

 4. Other measures of regulation or imposition of ‘public will’ on individuals would need to be negotiated with a view of the value to the public of the conservation or environmental issue being considered, the impact or disruption on the individual’s business, any loss of capacity to earn income from their



land, any loss of value of the asset (land value), any increase in costs of management as a result of the measure. In other words compensation should be made and be adequate.

5. International conventions while often supported by landholders should equally be subject to compensation as the State or Commonwealth as in para 4. With some lateral thinking there is a possible win in many measures for the landowner and the public good. Rate relief, eco-tourism, management support, involvement and awareness training of the value of the measure as well as or in lieu of cash compensation could be appropriate.

6. There is considerable scope for increased conservation measures on landholders without regulation or imposition by Governments. In the area of conservation of flora & fauna habitat as well as broad bio-diversity conservation, a greater extension effort in awareness raising, involvement of individuals in monitoring and some research where possible would assist in a positive way rather than a negative heavy hand of Government. Greater support of school environmental & landcare education projects similar to that being run on the south coast of WA and part funded by the Natural Heritage Trust should have a positive impact on future landholders as well as present via their children.



-
7. Mechanisms such as trusts, market driven initiatives such as eco-tourism, management agreements and tax incentives could all play a part in encouraging conservation.

 8. The WA Farmers Federation welcomes the opportunity to have input to the Standing Committee on Environment & Heritage and would like to be kept informed of any outcomes/recommendations resulting from this inquiry.

Marie Clarenc for

email: marie_waff@waff.org.au

Garry English

Tel 08 9075 4045

LANDCARE SPOKEPERSON

email: jangarri@wn.com.au

WA FARMERS FEDERATION

Tel: 08 9325 2933

Contact details: